SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Okay. Thank you very much.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM NAIK : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to whether he feels that ESI is functioning efficiently and no other organisation can serve better than it. Would you go in for sample survey and know the reaction of the workers there to? Would you tell the names of trade unions which have given their consent for extending the time limit?

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA : As the issue of hon'ble member has mentioned the extension of ESI Scheme and inclusion of more people in it has been decided after conducting survey. Opinion of almost all the trade Unions have been sought. The Hon'ble member may tell me about the trade unions which were not consulted on this issue...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAM NAIK : Whether the trade unions which were consulted on this issue, have given their consent. If so, which are those trade unions?

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA : All the trade unions included in the Consultative Advisory Board of ESI have been consulted on it. Please tell me about trade unions which have been left out. We will seek their opinion in the matter.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : It is an important question. Unfortunately the Labour Minister is also not present here and many hon'ble Members want to know about it. It will be better if this is taken up during Half-an-Hour discussion.

[English]

SHRI PRADIP BHATTACHARYA : You are perfectly correct. It requires Half-an-Hour discussion. But the most important thing I would like to place before you is, so many trade unions...

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : You can speak on this issue during Half-an-Hour discussion.

[English]

We have already agreed for Half-an-Hour discussion on this question. So, please do not mention it now.

Crisis in SAIL Units

*82. SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) as a whole or any of its units are facing threat or crisis as a result of high competition and economic liberalisation;

(b) if so, the details thereof, unit-wise; and

(c) the remedial measures proposed to be taken by the Government to overcome the problem?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

There is no threat or crisis in the Steel Authority of India.

SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI : I am surprised to see how this very new and dynamic Minister is provoked to be misled by his officers to suppress the truth before the nation. I do not mind it because it is his job to give reply. The time has come when the entire nation will judge whether this reply is correct or incorrect. I do not like to embarrass the officials of the SAIL with respect to what they deposed before various fora of Parliament, but I would like to remind him only one thing.

The Nitish Sengupta Committee which was set up to examine and go into the entire details...

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Munshiji, question please.

SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI : I am coming to the question, Sir.

[Translation]

He has denied it flatly. But I would like to say that we have to bring out truth if he does not accept it.

[English]

I quote the Nitish Sengupta Committee's observation :

> "In a free trade regime with import duties falling everywhere, Indian steel plants are in danger of being overwhelmed in the domestic market by the global majority and cannot also gain easy access to other markets unless their ware is the best priced and also carries the tag of good, not just passable quality".

I would like to know from the hon. Minister where it is a fact that the falling import duty of steel day in day out provided India as a dumping ground and that dumping ground in India is being allowed in the interest of foreign countries at the cost of our own domestic production. Why I am saying this is because the same Minister replied in the other House to Shrimati Jayanthi Natarajan that Indian steel plants are having the capacity to meet the domestic requirements fully and there is no question of any crisis in the plants. If the domestic requirement can be met fully and at the same time at a lesser price the dumping of the imported steel goes on with the falling of the imported steel, how will you justify the viability of the steel plants in India in future?

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA : I have given the actual figures and the actual position that the steel industry is in our country. There is no question of the officers misleading me. The day before yesterday the Economic Survey report was placed before the House. As per the report, the Indian steel industry witnessed more impressive performance as compared to the previous years. While the exports are going up, as per the report submitted by the Finance Ministry, the export is higher than the import.

We are exporting more than what we are importing. in terms of the previous year, the trend is of the same level.

The Ministry of Commerce is the nodal Ministry for dumping and our Ministry has already advised sail to form a Cell to take remedial action for the problem faced by the Steel Authority of India. I do agree with the hon. Member, Shri Dasmunsi that due to the continuous reduction in customs duty, the steel industry is facing some problems. I do admit it. It is not meant for...*(Interruptions)* The import duty is going to have a continuous effect on the steel industry in our country. If the exice duty is also increased, it will also have an effect. In other words, the duty structure will create certain problems. I do agree with the hon. Members. But it is not meant only for the steel industry. The steel industry performs well and I believe it will continue to contribute to the economy.

SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI : You have personally heard the reply of the hon. Minister. My question was not about the performance of the steel plants and the steel industry. My question was, whether the present economic liberalisation policy is creating a crisis for the steel plants and the SAIL units or not. The Minister himself has replied that the question of reduction of duty day in and day out is really posing a crisis and a threat. My question was that. I said that his officers have misled him. That was what I said and exactly, he admitted it.

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA : Sir, the steel industry is a commercial industry. We are facing various problems. Our input cost is increasing due to several reasons; not only because of the duty structure, but due to the price hike and due to the customs duty also. I admit that this is one of the factors. The customs and the excise duty is one of the factors but it is not meant only for the steel industry. It is there for the steel industry also. The problem is there but I do believe that it will be possible for the steel industry to overcome the problem.

SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI : My second supplementary is this. I will not go into the details of the matter now to embarrass you. I am in a mood to help you. I would like to put a question straightaway to you.

Is it a fact that in spite of severe losses incurred by three steel plants - the Durgapur Steel Plant, the Rourkela Steel Plant and, from time to time, the Bhilai Steel Plant - the handling charges in the stockyard was paid in a manner beyond proportions in the past - I do not know about the present - to drain out a lot of resources of the steel plants to make fortune for a few individuals? If so, are you going to set up an investigating committee to go into why this was so done and at whose behest? If today the political leaders are on the dock of the Supreme Court and everyday being maligned, why should you not do some inquiry in SAIL as to who drained out the entire resources on handling charges?

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA : Sir, the Steel Authority of India is continuously making profits. Except the Durgapur Steel Plant, the Bokaro Steel Plant and the Bhilai Steel Plant are continuously making profits. Two plants are running on losses.

Regarding transport and handling charges, I am happy to inform the House that in the current year the transport and handling charges are going to decline. This is a healthy sign for the Steel Authority of India...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI : How is it going to be possible?

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA : It is a commercial organisation. We are dealing through public tenders. We have accepted the lowest bid. The lowest bid quoted is less than that of the previous year. So, it is going to decline.

If there is a specific allegation, we have no hesitation in holding an inquiry against any officer or against any person. If a specific allegation is given to me, I am ready to hold an inquiry. We need a specific allegation. Without a specific allegation, we cannot take any action.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : Sir, through you, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether ISSCO, Burnpur falls within your discretion. Is it a loss incurring firm? If it is a loss incurring firm, what are you doing to help it? I am particularly asking about ISSCO, Burnpur. What is the state of affairs with regard to ISSCO, Burnpur at the moment? Is it part of the Steel Authority of India or is it a separate entity? If it is a separate entity, what are you doing to help it?

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA : Sir, it is under my Ministry. It has been referred to BIFR. The Government is very seriously considering to modernise the IISCO. But whatever steps we have to take, we have to take the approval from the BIFR.

SHRI PRADIP BHATTACHARYA : The most important point I would like to know from the hon. Minister is that

as to how much quantity of steel is lying at the stock-yard now. What are the steps the Government is taking to sell it in the market? I am sure the hon. Minister will agree with me that when the Steel Authority of India go to the market, they would have found that it is a buyers market and not the sellers market. What steps the Government is thinking to meet the requirements of industrial market, the domestic market and other markets? How are they going to explore all these things?

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA : Sir, the development of the steel industry depends upon the economic growth and industrial growth of the country. However, steel growth is higher than the economic growth and industrial growth of the country. So, the inventory is going up. Supply is higher than demand. Once supply is higher than demand, the inventory is going up. So, the Steel Authority of India and the Government of India have taken several measures to decrease the inventory.

SHRI PRADIP BHATTACHARYA : But I would like to know how much quantity of steel is available at the stock yard.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please sit down. You have already put your question. Now, Mr. Chatterjee, please ask your question.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : Please give me two minutes.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Two minutes for suplementary!

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : It is for just introduction.

The scene regarding the steel industry is very interesting. The House may be surprised to know that today the world number one producer of steel is not any advanced country, but China. Now, why has this happened? The requirement of steel in the developed countries is coming down because of the development of infrastructure and the development of capital goods industry. This is agreed to by all the international analysts. They are cutting down their production. They are trying to dump the surplus availability in the developing countries where the need is still more.

The second aspect is, it is a very funny scene. We have the best quality of steel in the world. We have adequate coal reserves also, though not of adequate quality. Despite that Japan which does not have these resources produces it at cheaper price.

The hon. Minister has referred to the Economic Survey. He has also conceded the point raised by hon. Member, Shri Das Munsi. The performance in terms of production is all right. The inventories are pilling up. The sale is not all right. The argument that he has advanced that the economy is not advancing had been refuted by Prof. Alagh yesterday. Yesterday he said that the growth in the manufacturing sector is no less than in the past.

My question, therefore, is in view of the fact that our inventories are accumulating and in view of the fact that the developed countries are trying to dump it on the under-developed countries, would he insist on the Minister of Finance that the customs duty on this steel sector and on this steel products should be enhanced in the course of this Budget?

There is a Commission. I have got the report with me on steel. Second part of my question is, whether that Commission on steel industry will be immediately formed with a suitable Chairman and make it functioning so that the cost aspect is taken into account.

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA : Regarding duty structure, my Ministry has already taken up the matter with the Finance Ministry. We want that there should be no further reduction in the import duty and no further hike in the excise duty, in the interest of the existing steel industry in our country.

Restriction on Foreign Satellite Channels

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*84. SHRIMATI RATNMALA D. SAVANOOR :
SHRI RAVINDRA KUMAR PANDEY :

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether private TV channels, show only such programmes and films which are full of violence, vulgarity and obscenity;

(b) whether the Government propose to legally restrict the telecasts of such undesirable programmes by foreign satellite channels;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) Private TV channels beam their programmes from outside the country. Some of these channels, at times, do not exhibit the requisite degree of sensitivity to Indian values and culture.

(b) to (d) Government intends to introduce a bill in the Parliament which would seek to facilitate the broadcasting of such channels within the ambit of the proposed law and, inter-alia, provide for application of a broadcasting and advertising code on such satellite channels.